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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 005815

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [KNNP](#) [ECON](#) [IN](#) [CH](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: INDIAN LEFT OPPOSES "PRO-US SHIFT" BUT WILL
CONTINUE TO SUPPORT UPA FOR ITS OWN PURPOSES

REF: A. NEW DELHI 5685

[B](#). NEW DELHI 5616

Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. Summary: The Left Front heavily criticized agreements reached during the PM's visit to Washington, claiming that the UPA has abandoned its pledge in the Common Minimum Program (CMP) to pursue "multipolarity," in favor of a "pro-US shift" initiated by the previous NDA government. The CPI and CPI(M) also denounced the allegedly secretive nature of India/US negotiations and questioned what it characterized as the unilateral nature of the civilian nuclear cooperation agreement. Freshly returned from China, CPI(M) General Secretary Prakash Karat is leading the Left charge, as he

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positions his party for upcoming elections in West Bengal and Kerala and establishes himself as a strong new leader of the Left Front (LF). While the gulf between the UPA and the Left continues to grow, we do not believe the LF will withdraw support from this government as long as the NDA/BJP is still viable and there is no alternative to the UPA. End Summary.

Left Calls "Secret" Negotiations With US "Undemocratic"

2.(U) Both the CPI and CPI(M) derided the UPA government for not consulting other parties while negotiating the agreements announced in the US-India joint statement (Ref A). The CPI(M) characterized the "secret" negotiations on foreign and defense policy as a continuation of the "undemocratic practices" of the previous NDA government. Zeroing in on the US-India democracy initiative, the parties asserted that since the US cannot rightfully claim to be spreading democracy and combating terrorism, it "does not serve India's interest," to sign on to a deceptive American agenda. The LF bemoaned the July 18 joint statement as a further demonstration of the pro-US shift in India's foreign policy and a UPA betrayal of the "independent" foreign policy it promised to follow in the CMP. (Note: The PM met the Left parties July 26 to discuss their critique of the Washington visit. End Note.)

Nuclear Deal Not Good Enough, Should Be Multilateral

[1](#)3. (U) Although CPI General Secretary AB Bardhan had initially called the civilian nuclear agreement a "welcome step" (Ref B), both the CPI and CPI(M) subsequently criticized it for delivering nothing more than "intangible US promises" for India. The CPI secretariat claimed the agreement reversed "India's earlier nuclear policy," and should have been multilateral through the IAEA or similar international organizations rather than bilateral. The CPI(M) questioned whether Indian concessions would limit independent research, noted the statement's "silence" regarding what India promised to provide the US in return for civilian technology, and questioned whether India has arrived at an "understanding" to buy "billions of dollars" of US defense equipment.

Iran-Pakistan-India Pipeline is a Test for UPA

[1](#)4. (U) In the run-up to the PM's visit and prior to his own visit to Beijing, CPI(M) General Secretary Prakash Karat asserted that India should make it clear to the US that it had no right to dissuade India from the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. Karat and Bardhan characterized the PM's cautious remarks in Washington regarding the project as an attack of "cold feet," and demanded a GOI explanation. Describing the pipeline project as an "acid test" that would indicate whether the UPA government intended to pursue an independent foreign policy or "submit" to the US, Bardhan reminded the PM of his previous statements that the GOI would not countenance interference from other countries in the pipeline project.

UN Security Council Seat

[1](#)5. (U) Before the PM's trip, Karat had criticized the UPA for seeking US support for its bid for a permanent UNSC seat. According to Karat, such efforts were needlessly humiliating

for New Delhi, as Washington has no intention of backing India. Karat characterized the USG's stated position that it will support one or two more Asian countries in addition to Japan, as manipulation meant to gain more Indian concessions and reduce India to a US "junior partner" in Asia.

Global Democracy Initiative is Hypocritical

16. (C) The CPI(M) has also denounced the US-India Global Democracy Initiative. Stating that the US is "hardly the exemplar of upholding democracy around the world," the party demanded that any democracy initiative be through the UN rather than on a bilateral level. CPI General Secretary D Raja maintained to Poloffs on July 26 that the Initiative was fundamentally flawed, as India and the US subscribe to conflicting definitions of "democratic values." Raja also questioned how the US or any country could claim the right to "export" democracy, when all countries have a fundamental right to define democracy on their own terms.

Karat Asserts Himself as New CPI(M) Leader

17. (C) In his first foreign visit since taking over leadership of the party in April, CPI(M) General Secretary Prakash Karat was in China July 11-20, meeting with Chinese Communist Party officials and scholars at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. In meetings with Chinese officials, Karat reportedly stressed the close ties between the CPI(M) and the Communist Party of China (CPC) and their importance to the Sino-Indian relationship, while urging China and India to work together to promote peace and development in Asia and accelerate the return of multi-polarity. "Hindu" Journalist Harish Khare told Poloffs on July 26 that Karat's China trip was of little consequence. Noting the historical friendship between the CPC and CPI(M), he characterized the visit as "routine."

18. (C) Khare pointed out that Karat's increasingly frequent and strident criticism of the UPA is a political necessity if he hopes to establish himself as a strong LF leader. Khare anticipated further "friendly confrontation" between the UPA and the Left in the current Parliament session and the run-up to elections in the CPI(M) strongholds of West Bengal and Kerala, but emphasized that its significance should not be overblown. Khare remained confident that despite the heated rhetoric, the Left would support the UPA government and not try to bring it down. In his estimation, the LF criticism would actually benefit the PM, as he could use it to extract greater concessions from the US and win popular support for the UPA.

Comment: Salad Days for the Left

19. (C) The BJP is inwardly absorbed and increasingly unable to fill its role as the country's leading opposition party (septel). The Left is moving to fill the resulting political vacuum by raising its voice and demanding to be heard on both domestic and foreign policy issues. Having successfully delayed or frustrated some elements of the UPA's economic reform package, the LF is now looking to exert its influence on foreign policy. While the Left claims not to mind "friendly ties" with the US, it adamantly opposes what it deems to be an emerging relationship in which India abandons non-alignment and appears increasingly subservient to US interests. Despite its growing opposition to many UPA policies, the Left has determined that now is not the time to bring down the government. Instead, it will continue vocal opposition, build its strength, and campaign hard to win early 2006 elections in West Bengal and Kerala. These are the Left's salad days: they get to criticize the government yet retain influence, they use the bully pulpit to complain but do not offer their own solutions, and they get to use their moment in the sun to strut and preen before elections in states where they continue to enjoy political relevance.

BLAKE